

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
CORPUS CHRISTI DIVISION**

**SHERMAN MARTIN FRANK** §  
**V.** § **CA C-06-03**  
**WARDEN EILEEN KENNEDY . ET AL.** §

**MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER DENYING MOTION  
FOR APPOINTMENT OF COUNSEL**

Plaintiff is an inmate in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice - Institutional Division, currently assigned to the Clements Unit in Amarillo, Texas. Proceeding *pro se* and *in forma pauperis*, plaintiff filed a civil rights complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging that defendants/prison officials at the McConnell Unit in Beeville, Texas, failed to protect him from harm by other inmates. Plaintiff's complaint has been screened pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915, and service of process on defendants has been ordered. Pending is plaintiff's motion for appointment of counsel (D.E. 25).

In Bounds v. Smith, the Supreme Court held that a prisoner's constitutional right of access to the courts requires that the access be meaningful; that is, prison officials must provide pro se litigants with writing materials, access to the law library, or other forms of legal assistance. Bounds v. Smith, 430 U.S. 817, 829 (1977). There is, however, no constitutional right to appointment of counsel in civil rights cases. Akasike v. Fitzpatrick, 26 F.3d 510, 512 (5th Cir. 1994); Branch v. Cole, 686 F.2d 264, 266 (5th Cir. 1982). Further, Bounds did not create a "free-standing right to a law library or legal assistance." Lewis v. Casey, 116 S. Ct. 2174, 2180 (1996). It is within the Court's discretion to appoint counsel, unless the case presents "exceptional circumstances," thus requiring the appointment. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(1); Cupit v. Jones, 835 F.2d 82, 86 (5th Cir. 1987).

A number of factors should be examined when determining whether to appoint counsel. Jackson v. Dallas Police Department, 811 F.2d 260, 261-62 (5th Cir. 1986) (citing Ulmer v. Chancellor,

691 F.2d 209 (5th Cir. 1982)). The first is the type and complexity of the case. Id. This case is not complex. According to plaintiff, defendants were aware that plaintiff was at risk of harm by other inmates, and failed and refused to act to keep him safe. He was attacked and harmed by other inmates as a result. Though serious, plaintiff's allegations are not complex.

The second and third factors are whether the plaintiff is in a position to adequately investigate and present his case. Plaintiff's pleadings demonstrate he is reasonably articulate and intelligent and he understands his claims. Plaintiff appropriately responded to an order for a more definite statement. At this early stage of the case, plaintiff is in a position to adequately investigate and present his case.

The fourth factor which should be examined is whether the evidence will consist in large part of conflicting testimony so as to require skill in the presentation of evidence and in cross-examination. Examination of this factor is premature because the case has not yet been set for trial. Defendants have not yet filed their answer, and dispositive motions have not yet been filed.

Finally, there is no indication that appointed counsel would aid in the efficient and equitable disposition of the case. The Court has the authority to award attorneys' fees to a prevailing plaintiff. 42 U.S.C. § 1988. Plaintiff is not prohibited from hiring an attorney on a contingent-fee arrangement. Plaintiff's motion for appointment of counsel (D.E. 25) is denied without prejudice at this time. This order will be *sua sponte* reexamined as the case proceeds.

ORDERED this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of June, 2006.

  
B. JANICE ELLINGTON  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE